

PRESS RELEASE

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FOREMAN OF VASQUEZ HARVESTING SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS INCARCERATION FOLLOWED BY 3 YEARS SUPERVISED RELEASE FOR ENCOURAGING ALIENS TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES, RESULTING IN DEATH

PHOENIX, ARIZONA —The United States Attorneys Office for the District of Arizona, announced that on April 18, 2003, JOEL VIVEROS-FLORES, D.O.B.1-4-69, of Lake Placid, Florida, was sentenced to 18 months incarceration by United States District Judge Earl H. Carroll, in Phoenix, Arizona, for alien smuggling leading to death in the Arizona desert near Yuma. United States Attorney Paul K. Charlton said "With the summer months quickly approaching, I hope that this case will serve as yet another reminder to smugglers and employers who contract with smugglers that we will search for them nation wide, and they will go to prison. A leader of this conspiracy, "El Negro", remains a fugitive, and but with the help of our Mexican counterparts, I am confident that we will locate and try him as well."

On May 19, 2001, a group of twenty-six (26) Mexican nationals, primarily from Vera Cruz and La Paz, Baja, Mexico, were smuggled into the United States near Lukeville, Arizona, by Mexican guides. The guides were working on behalf of a large scale, Mexican based smuggling operation. Defendant (MORE)

VIVEROS-FLORES, a foreman for Francisco Vasquez-Torres, the owner and operator of Vasquez-Harvesting, a fruit harvesting business located in Lake Placid, Florida, conspired and agreed with Vasquez-Torres and those in the smuggling organization to bring five(5) of the Mexican nationals from La Paz, Baja, Mexico, to work at Vasquez Harvesting. Vasquez-Torres paid the smuggling fee for each of the five(5) Mexican nationals. The nationals were then to repay Vasquez-Torres from their wages while working for Vasquez Harvesting. Defendant VIVEROS-FLORES wired money from Florida to the aliens in Mexico to assist them while they waited to be smuggled into the United States.

Between May 19 and May 23, 2001, the group of twenty-six(26) Mexican nationals was lead by guides through the desert of southeastern Arizona in a futile attempt to reach a predetermined point on Arizona Sate Highway 85 just north of Ajo, Arizona. From that point the group was to have been transported by automobile to Phoenix, Arizona, where they would await subsequent transportation to other destinations throughout the United States where their employment had been secured.

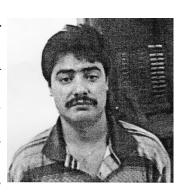
The majority of the group's members exhausted their supply of water during the second day of their journey. On May 20, 2001, two of the nationals abandoned the ill fated attempt and returned to Mexico. Those that remained were repeatedly told by guides that their destination was a short distance away. The guides were actually leading the group in the wrong direction and were moving further away from Ajo into an uninhabited portion of the desert.

During the final two days, fourteen(14) of the nationals perished as a result of severe dehydration and heat stroke. Twelve(12) others were rescued on May 23, 2001, at various areas throughout the desert.

VIVEROS-FLORES had been found guilty by jury on August 15, 2002, of conspiring to bring aliens to the United States and encouraging aliens to enter the United States, at a place other than a designated point of entry, which resulted in the death of one or more persons. VIVEROS-FLORES was allowed to remain released on bond pending his appeal in this case.

Other defendants sentenced in connection with this tragedy include the following. JESUS LO PEZ-RAMOS was sentenced February 22, 2002, by U.S. District Judge Susan R. Bolton to 16 years in prison on twenty-five felony counts charging him with alien smuggling resulting in the deaths of fourteen illegal immigrants and serious bodily injury to eleven others. FRANCISCO VASQUEZ-TORRES, of Lake Placid, Florida, was sentenced April 4, 2003, to 78 months incarceration and fined \$125,000, by United States District Judge Earl H. Carroll. VASQUEZ-TORRES had been found guilty by jury on July 2, 2002, of conspiring to bring aliens to the United States, for the purposes of commercial advantage and private financial gain, persons he knew were aliens, at a place other than a designated point of entry, which resulted in the death of one or more of those persons.

A federal arrest warrant was issued on September 13, 2001, for fugitive EVODIO MANILLA-CABRERA, AKA "EL NEGRO", AKA ANTONIO CABRERA-GOMEZ, AKA JAVIER MORELLA-CABRERA, AKA ALEJANDRO MANILLA-CABRERA, AKA JUAN LICONA-MANELLA, DOB 4/25/72, 6/24/72, 4/25/74, 4/25/75, born in Honey, Puebla,



Mexico, based on a federal grand jury Indictment in connection with this incident.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the United States Border Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, together wit the Yuma and Pima County Sheriff's Offices.

The prosecution was handled by Thomas c. Simon, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-01-821-002-PHX-EHC

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